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Big Losses Of Soviet Planes Cited

Afghan Rebels Said To Down One a Day

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Afghan rebels, who recently began receiving U.S.-supplied Stinger antiaircraft missiles, have inflicted heavy losses on Soviet and Afghan aircraft the past three months, shooting down about one a day, the State Department said yesterday.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Robert Peck, commenting on a report marking the seventh anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, said the rebels had achieved a "significant increase" in air-defense capability and inflicted "an unprecedented rate of aircraft losses."

"Over the past three months, aircraft losses, communist aircraft losses in Afghanistan, have been running in the neighborhood of one aircraft per day," Peck said.

He refused to say whether the Stingers, which the Reagan administration decided last March to make available as part of a covert military aid program, were responsible for the upswing in downed helicopters and fixed-wing planes. The Stinger, a heat-seeking surface-to-air missile that is effective against low-altitude craft, can be shouldered by one person.

The 19-page report, presented by Deputy Secretary of State John C. Whitehead, said that the mainstay of the rebel air defenses remained old Soviet-made 12.7mm heavy machine guns, but that the rebels had also made use of more sophisticated weapons this past year, including "various types" of surface-to-air missiles.

The rebels are also known to have obtained British-built Blowpipe surface-to-air missiles and Swiss-made 20mm Oerlikon and Chinese-built 14.5mm Ziguyac an-

tiacraft weapons. Stingers first reached the battlefield in relatively small numbers early this fall, according to U.S. sources close to the resistance movement.

What difference the Stingers may have made to the ability of the rebels to deal with Soviet- and Afghan-flown aircraft, particularly heavily armored helicopters, remains unclear.

The report said that in the conflict's seven years, the rebels have shot down "nearly 1,000" aircraft, mostly helicopters.

Whitehead said that despite a more intensive and sophisticated Soviet effort "on all fronts—military, political and diplomatic" the Afghan resistance had gained in strength through the summer and fall and ended the year "in a strong military position."

The report said the Soviets had "drastically" revised military tactics the past year, abandoning use of large-unit sweep operations in favor of smaller operations often employing helicopter assault troops.

Soviet casualties were "at least 3,000" through the fall of this year, the report said, bringing Soviet losses since 1979 to "at least 30,000-35,000, more than one third of whom were killed."

Whitehead said the Soviet-backed Kabul government has been unable to consolidate power except in areas controlled by Soviet forces. Efforts by the Soviets last May to gain legitimacy for their "puppet government" with the replacement of Babrak Karmal by Mohammed Najibullah, have intensified "without notable success," Whitehead said.

The rebel alliance of seven guerrilla factions also has had problems, according to Whitehead. Internal political divisions hampered the alliance's effectiveness "in making its case to the world," but it is moving to improve "practical cooperation" among the factions, he said.

Whitehead noted that Pakistan, where 3 million Afghan refugees live and which serves as a rear base for the rebels, came under increased Soviet "intimidation" this past year.

There were more than 700 air violations of Pakistani territory by "communist aircraft," a threefold increase over 1985, and incidents of artillery bombardment jumped by almost 500 percent, Whitehead said.